

personnel and civilians are in the same financial position as they were prior to the terrorist attacks with respect to their student loans. And it has been drafted so as to not impair the integrity of the student loan programs.

The Secretary of Education is given some discretion under the Higher Education Act to defer payments on student loans. But this authority does not go far enough. The HEROS Act would empower the Secretary to take several additional steps to provide needed relief to help those directly affected by the terrorist attacks.

Specifically, the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act authorizes the Secretary of Education to relax repayment obligations for Guard members and Reservists called up to active duty, to provide a period of time during which the victims and their families may reduce or delay monthly student loan payments, and to assist educational institutions and lenders with reporting requirements.

All of these steps can be taken while still ensuring the integrity of our student loan programs.

This legislation is modeled on a previous law that was enacted during the Gulf War to provide relief for our men and women in the military. In short, there is precedent for authorizing the Secretary of Education to provide these kinds of relief.

I am pleased to be joined by five of my colleagues in introducing this bill, and I thank them all for their support. I also commend Representative McKEON for his leadership on the House version of the HEROS Act. His initiative will help ensure that we provide adequate student loan relief to Reservists, Guard members, and victims' families.

I look forward to the swift passage of this legislation.

Mr. President, I send the bill to the desk and ask it be appropriately referred at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill will be received and appropriately referred.

STATEMENTS ON SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 172—EX- PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE UR- GENT NEED TO PROVIDE EMER- GENCY HUMANITARIAN ASSIST- ANCE AND DEVELOPMENT AS- SISTANCE TO CIVILIANS IN AF- GHANISTAN, INCLUDING AFGHAN REFUGEES IN SURROUNDING COUNTRIES

Mr. WELLSTONE submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 172

Whereas, well before the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Afghanistan was the site of the greatest crisis of hunger and displacement in the world;

Whereas, after more than 20 years of conflict, 3 years of severe drought, and the repressive policies of the Taliban regime, 4,000,000 Afghans had sought refuge in neighboring countries, and Afghan women have one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, and one in four children dies before the child's fifth birthday;

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that 1,500,000 additional Afghans could seek to flee the country in coming months due to the ongoing military conflict;

Whereas all 6 countries neighboring Afghanistan have closed their borders to refugees both on security grounds and citing an inability to economically provide for more refugees, and thousands have been trapped at borders with no food, shelter, water, or medical care;

Whereas 7,500,000 people inside Afghanistan face critical food shortages or risk starvation by winter's end, and are partially or fully dependent on outside assistance for survival, and of these people, 70 percent are women and children;

Whereas the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), which distributes most of the food within Afghanistan, estimates that food stocks in the country are critically short, and WFP overland food shipments inside and outside the border of Afghanistan have been disrupted due to security concerns over United States military strikes;

Whereas airdrops of food by the United States military cannot by itself meet the enormous humanitarian needs of the Afghan people, and cannot replace the most effective delivery method of overland truck convoys of food, nor can it replace access to affected populations by humanitarian agencies;

Whereas the President has announced a \$320,000,000 initiative to respond to the humanitarian needs in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees in neighboring countries, and much more international assistance is clearly needed; and

Whereas the United States is the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people, totaling more than \$185,000,000 in fiscal year 2001: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, **SECTION 1. SENSE OF THE SENATE ON HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FOR THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN.**

It is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) Afghanistan's neighbors should reopen their borders to allow for the safe passage of refugees, and the international community must be prepared to contribute to the economic costs incurred by the flight of desperate Afghan civilians;

(2) as the United States engages in military action in Afghanistan, it must work to deliver assistance, particularly through overland truck convoys, and safe humanitarian access to affected populations, in partnership with humanitarian agencies in quantities sufficient to alleviate a large scale humanitarian catastrophe; and

(3) the United States should contribute to efforts by the international community to provide long-term, sustainable reconstruction and development assistance for the people of Afghanistan, including efforts to protect the basic human rights of women and children.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, even before the world focused on it as a sanctuary for Osama bin Laden and other terrorists, Afghanistan was on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe, the site of the greatest crisis in hunger and refugee displacement in the world. Now the worsening situation on

the ground is almost unimaginable. After 4 years of relentless drought, the worst in three decades, and the total failure of the Taliban government in administering the country, 4 million people have abandoned their homes in search of food in Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and elsewhere, while those left behind eat meals of locusts and animal fodder.

Mr. President, 7.5 million people inside the country are threatened by famine or severe hunger as cold weather approaches, according to the United Nations.

As President Bush made clear, we are waging a campaign against terrorists, not ordinary Afghans, who are some of the poorest and most beleaguered people on the planet and were our allies during the cold war.

Yet, the current military air strikes and the disintegration of security is worsening the humanitarian situation on the ground.

Aid organizations are increasingly concerned about their ability to deliver aid to Afghanistan while the United States continues its bombing campaign. Several aid organizations have been accidentally bombed by the United States in the last week. In addition to these accidental bombings, law and order are breaking down inside Afghanistan. Reports indicate that thieves have broken into several aid organization offices, beat up the Afghan staff and stolen vehicles, spare parts, and other equipment.

Warehouses of the International Red Cross in Kabul were bombed yesterday. The ICRC says that the warehouses were clearly marked white with a large red cross visible from the air. One worker was wounded and is now in stable condition. One warehouse suffered a direct hit, which destroyed tarpaulins, plastic sheeting, and blankets, while another containing food caught on fire and was partially destroyed. The Pentagon claimed responsibility for the bombing later in the day, adding that they "regret any innocent casualties," and that the ICRC warehouses were part of a series of warehouses that the United States believed were used to store military equipment. "There are huge needs for the civilian population, and definitely it will hamper our operations," Robert Monin, head of the International Red Cross' Afghanistan delegation, said on Islamabad, Pakistan.

Another missile struck near a World Food Program warehouse in Afsotar, wounding one laborer. The missile struck as trucks were being loaded for an Oxfam convoy to the Hazarajat region, where winter will begin closing off the passes in the next two weeks. Loading was suspended and the warehouse remains closed today.

Last week, four U.N. workers for a demining operation were accidentally killed when a bomb struck their office in Kabul.

In response to the dangers threatening humanitarian operations, the